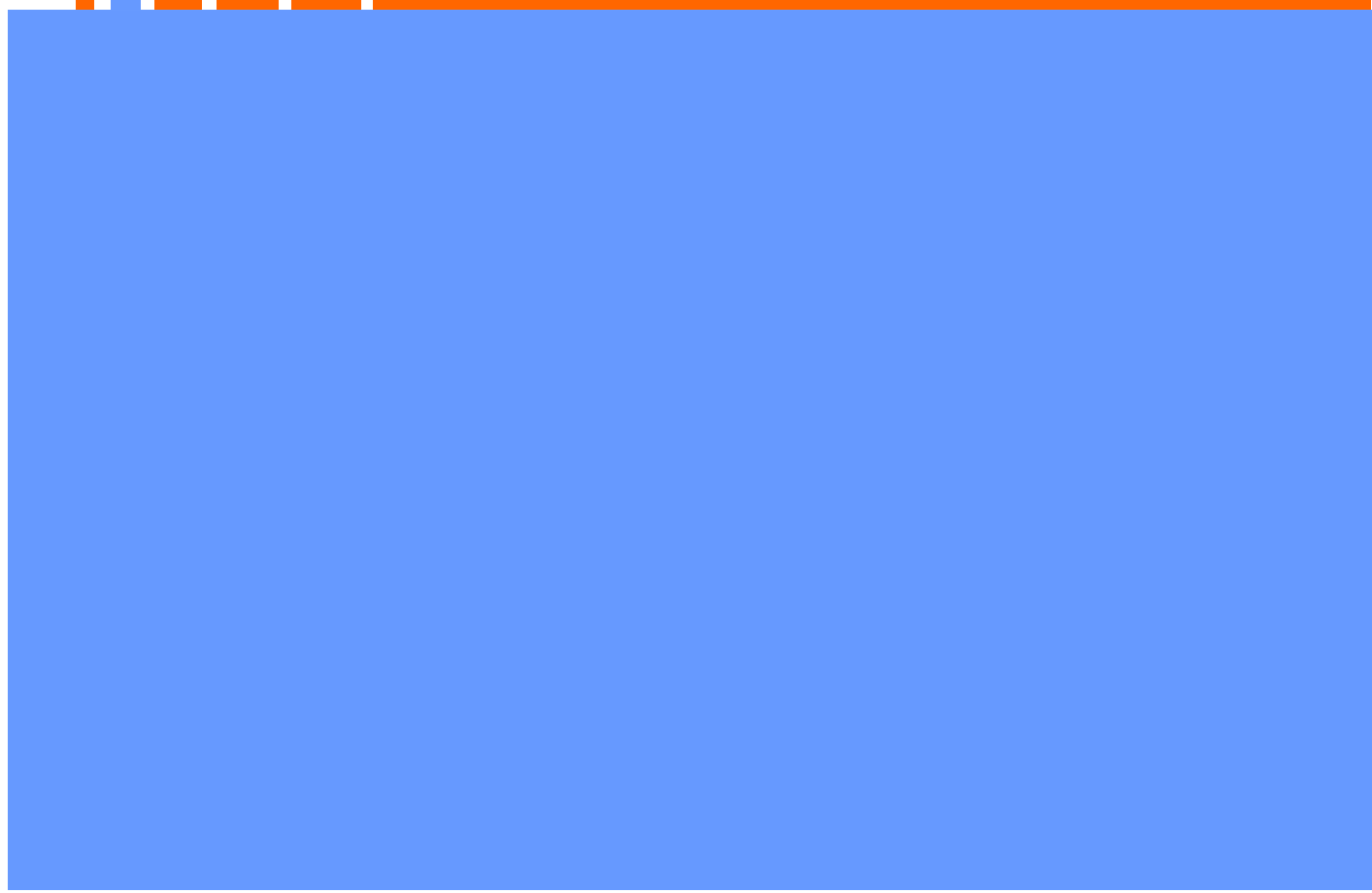
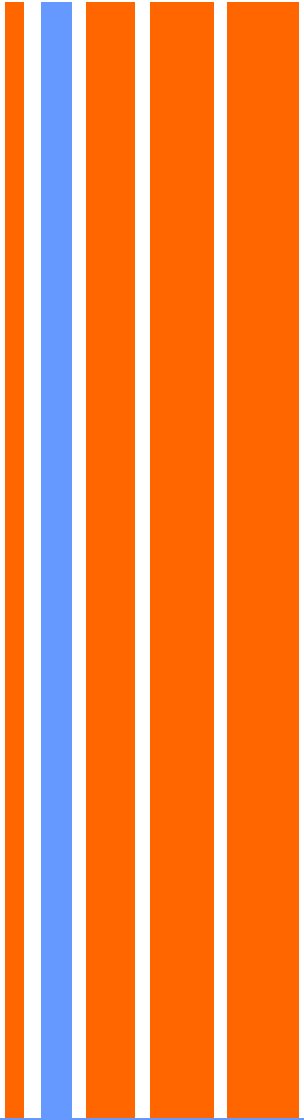




**EDUCATION
AND HISTORY**



RESEARCH AND POLICY ADVICE

Critical Issues in Education Policy: Citizens' Review of the National Education Policy (1998- 2010)

In recent years teachers, education policy researchers, parents, concerned citizens, and civil society groups have campaigned for sweeping reform of Pakistan's education system. Responding to this pressure, the Government of Pakistan decided to conduct a mid-term review of the prevailing Education Policy, laid out in the National Education Policy 1998-2010.

To help inform the Government's review, SDPI and the Pakistan Coalition for Education organized a series of public consultations with teachers, education administrators, education policy researchers, and concerned citizens in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta. The aim was to clarify and present an independent perspective on education policy reform. Critique of the policy (1998-2010) could not have been prepared without the five workshop consultations. The greatest benefit of the workshops was that it was possible to garner expert opinions from across the country. Since many education-focused issues reflect specific geographic, demographic, socio-economical and cultural contexts, the participants had useful insights into regional issues. Some participants were eager to register their opinions, while others were more reticent.

Briefly, the consultations considered and gave recommendations on the following issues:

- Aims and Objectives of Education
- Provision of Education: Access, Financing, Equity, Education for All and Non-formal Education

- Ensuring Quality of Education
- Teachers' Skills, Methods and Training
- The Examination System
- Education Management
- Technical and Vocational Education
- Language Teaching and the Medium of Instruction
- Private Sector Education
- Higher Education

Rewriting Oral Histories

History is the story of the past, told from the perspective of the present. As the present changes, history changes with it, because even if the past is, in one sense, entombed beyond the possibility of alteration, the constantly changing present leads us to ask different questions about it, and to put it together in ways that seek to make sense not only of the past, but of ourselves and our present predicaments.

Sometimes this changing quest may be guided by explicitly political agendas like the attempts of the states of India and Pakistan to rewrite the history of the region to propagate state ideologies and promote political agenda. The Partition of 1947 was a product not of ancient animosities, but of modern forces: colonialism, nationalism, the growth of a modern state structure, and the promise of democracy. Whatever the case may be, the Partition witnessed mass level communal genocide and human migration and displacement. It resulted in the transfer of approximately eight million Muslims, and equivalent numbers of Sikhs and Hindus, across the Indo-Pakistan borders in the north-west and north-east of the subcontinent in 1947. The largest single refugee movement of the 20th century was accompanied by communal violence and atrocities committed on all sides of the religious spectrum, with a death toll calculated at approximately 1 million.

The project asks the following key questions:

- How did the people of India, Pakistan and present day Bangladesh undergo the massacre and migration during and after Partition 1947?
- In 1971, what was the role of political and external agents in the establishment, nature and stability of Bangladesh?
- How did Bengalis face massacre and displacement? How did the immigrants of 1947, for instance, Bihari community, migrate again?
- What was the role played by minorities in saving lives and promoting interfaith harmony?

The aims of the project are, therefore, to record and develop a more comprehensive knowledge base addressing the above questions and to gain first hand understanding of the situation by depending more on oral history and ethnography. The project hopes that this recording and understanding will also be an enquiry into the cultural patterns, psychological sources, and social profile of the genocidal mentality in South Asian cultures.

In Pakistan, the emphasis is on the Mohajir community in Sindh and Punjab refugees in Punjab; in Bangladesh the focus is on refugees from both West Bengal and Bihar whom migrated from India to East Bengal in 1947, and then from Bangladesh to Pakistan after 1971.

What gives this project its urgency is that witnesses are old, and soon their memories may not be directly available to us. Yet, these memories, de-contextualised and reified, will survive as private fantasies transmitted over the generations as particularly potent form of folk memories. This limitation on the time available and the transience of the

witnesses define some of the specific questions to which we seek answers from individual respondents. How do they remember their pasts, and how have they adjusted to their present lives in relation to their memory of the past? How have they re-experienced, constructed or



cauterized the trauma and how have they transmitted these to the next generation? Have the experiences of the victims given a special meaning to their ideas of nation-state, nationalism, communal and ethnic relations? What explanation do they give for their survival and what roles have the other communities played in that survival? Through detailed interviews the manner in which a victim or a killer constructs his or her life-history centering around these issues, and the way the victim's life style dovetails into the constructed pasts, the official and the unofficial histories of the community to which he or she belongs, is being studied.

Our preliminary findings suggest that the strength of religious beliefs, family and community ties might have had something to do with the position the rescuers took against the communal violence. Perhaps, South Asia was more fortunate in that the forces of modernization and the consequent individuation and reification of social ties had not gone very far at the time. Especially important in this context is the manner in which the victims have chosen to interpret their past to their children and grandchildren.

Bangladesh appeared on the map followed by large scale ethnic violence and displacement. By recording the memories of people who witnessed these events in 1971, we are trying to understand the gendered nature of partition and war in the subcontinent, the multiple constructions and manifestations of postcolonial Muslim and Hindu identities, and developing a humanistic language aimed at understanding the actors, events, contexts and outcomes of the war to investigate the violence at a theoretical level, as well as through autobiographical testimonials of people who experienced, perpetrated, witnessed and suffered the ravages of the war. Bihari and other migrants who migrated from India to East Bengal in 1947

and then from Bangladesh to Pakistan after 1971, army and civil servants, students, media persons, shopkeepers are currently being interviewed by a team of researchers based in Bangladesh.

Minorities in Pakistan have been quite proactive in their approach towards serving the society, the roots of which can be traced back even before Pakistan came into existence. Various accounts of minorities' generosity and support are available, but have never been documented. One objective of this research is also to provide an insight into the spirit of humanity above the boundaries of religion, sect and language.

This two-year project is presently ongoing and being funded by Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF).

The Program team was also involved in delivering research-based academic lectures / talks at various national, regional and international forums (Annex 2); producing/writing papers, articles (Annex 3-4); and proposal development (Annex 5).

